

Climate change boosting flood, disaster peril

AFP, Paris

Billions of people will be at risk from storms, floods and droughts in the near future, partly as a result of global warming, an international water agency warned on Thursday.

"By 2025, half the world's population will be living in areas that are at risk from storms and other weather extremes," the World Water Council (WWC) said, citing evidence gathered by UN and other experts.

The economic cost will be huge, especially for poor countries that are likely to bear the brunt of these events, it said.

"Extreme weather records are (already) being broken every year and the resulting hydro-meteorological disasters claim thousands of lives and disrupt national economies," said William Cosgrove, vice president of the Marseille, France-based WWC.

"The big problem is that most countries aren't ready to deal adequately with the severe natural disasters that we get now, a situation that will become much worse as storms and droughts become more pervasive."

The agency gave the warning ahead of an eight-day conference, the Third World Water Forum, which opens in Kyoto, Japan, on March 16.

The forum is the keystone of UN efforts to draw attention this year to abuse of the world's pre-

cious supplies of freshwater.

Experts say rivers and aquifers in many parts of the world are being hit by industrial pollution, sewage disposal or excessive extraction. This worsens water quality, inflicts shortages and, in tense border regions, even exacerbates the risk of war.

The WWC emphasised that water supplies in many countries could be badly affected by climate change inflicted by the burning of fossil fuels.

"Droughts are becoming more severe and widespread," the WWC said. "Up to 45 per cent of reported deaths from natural disasters between 1992 and 2001 resulted from droughts and famines. The most vulnerable communities are impoverished people occupying marginal rural and urban environments."

It sounded the alarm for countries in Africa, saying the "unprecedented droughts" many have experienced "may signal widespread climate change".

The Council gave the example of Ghana's Akosombo Reservoir, a huge like created in 1966 that at one time supplied 95 per cent of the country's power needs and had enough electricity left over to export to neighbouring countries.

Now, however, the lake is less than half full because of less rainfall. That has had a huge economic impact, for electricity has had to be derived from other sources and, sometimes, must be rationed.

Part of the problem, it added, was that of human habitation in vulnerable areas, such as encroachment in flood plains.

The economic cost of extreme weather and flood catastrophes is severe and set to rise, hitting poorest nations the hardest, the WWC said.

Another result of climate change will be the risk of more frequent, and possibly more brutal, storms, extreme weather events.

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700 cases of forgery

US consulate

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Shah said one of the attackers had been arrested and his motorbike seized.

The attack is the second deadly strike outside the consulate in less than a year. On June 14 a suicide car bomb attack killed 12 Pakistanis outside the consulate building. The consulate moved to new premises two months later.

Five Islamic militants are currently on trial for the June attack.

Battle royale

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Canada, Sri Lanka and South Africa. The team had managed scores of 120, 124 and 108 respectively.

"He (Al-Shabir) is a very attacking batsman and played well in the lead-up games before the World Cup. So it's a good opportunity for him to make a big score because the Kenyan bowling is weaker compared to the other teams," said skipper Khaled Mashud.

Dean of the Social Sciences Faculty Prof Assaduzzaman said he engaged 50 teachers this year to detect the admission forms submitted with same mark-sheets. The teachers found 600 such applicants with 'pair' mark-sheets' (same mark-sheets) in 'Gha' unit.

"The admission committee will sit soon to take decision regarding the admission procedure," he said.

As a precautionary step, separate arrangement should be made for university students who want to appear at admission tests for the second time to change departments, Dean of the Arts Faculty Prof Kazi Shahidullah said.

"We try our best to ensure fairness in admission, but forgers always find out an alternative way," he said.

Shrimp

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international standard in shrimp production and processing.

Bill said, besides food safety, buyers also insist on certification of 'honesty and transparency' in the whole process.

Only a coordinated effort can ensure this by use of good quality fry, feed and ice, and maintenance of a totally germ-free atmosphere in processing and transportation, he said.

"He is not among the runs in this tournament. No doubt he is a class batsman but we also know his weaknesses," smiled Mashud.

According to industry sources, shrimp production, management and marketing have come under scrutiny of consumers, buyers, government watch-dogs and environmental groups in importing countries.

Shrimp Hatchery Association of Bangladesh (SHAB) President Muzib M Selim also spoke at the press conference, held at the Pioneer Hatchery Ltd.

A workshop on 'Shrimp Industry of Bangladesh-Codes and Certification for Survival and Sustainability' was also held here yesterday.

Urban food

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politicisation of the administration, the Awami League chief said. "A single family has looted Tk 11,000 crore in last one and a half years."

She said the government has become friendless and lost credibility, and is now going door to door begging for aid.

Earlier, president AKM Shamsul Abedin Sona Mia and general secretary Abdul Matin of Bogra Bar Association presented a crest to Sheikh Hasina and also spoke.

The over-all survey of our food habits, given above, seems almost similar to the food culture patterns as seen other big cities and towns of the country. This urban food culture is getting diversified with the march of time. And it is quite likely that in the near future, we may be witnessing a chain of big food shops like Macdonalds and wimpeys operating in many western cities.

SC Bar polls

TH Khan, Rumi Jatiyatobadi Forum candidates for president, secy

BSS, Dhaka

Four-party alliance-backed Jatiyatobadi Lawyers Forum has nominated Justice T H Khan and Miftaiddin Chowdhury Rumi to contest the Supreme Court Bar Association election for the posts of president and secretary.

Senior lawyers of the Forum at a meeting yesterday finalised the nominations.

Electio to the Supreme Court Bar Association will be held at the end of this month.

The Forum also nominated A K Mujibur Rahman and Harun-ar-Rashid for the posts of vice-presidents, Farid Uddin Khan and Shihabuddin Mahmaud for the posts of assistant secretaries and A S M Ramzan Khan for the post of treasurer.

Father's genes may determine birth timing

REUTERS, London

Paternal genes may hold the key to repeated prolonged pregnancies and help determine the timing of birth, Danish scientists said on Thursday.

Little is known about prolonged pregnancies, which last longer than 41 weeks, but around five per cent of all pregnant women have one and they can lead to complications at birth.

"The research is a first step to finding out what characterises women that go post-term because we don't really know who they are," Annette Wind Olesen, a researcher at Aarhus University in Denmark, told Reuters.

"It could also contribute to the knowledge of what triggers human delivery."



PHOTO: STAR
The Bangla Academy premises team with visitors on the last day of the Ekushey Book Fair in the city yesterday.

Indo-Pak battle today

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which New Delhi blamed on Islamabad.

Former prime minister Inder Kumar Gujral, an ardent cricket fan and a moderate among India's hawkish political establishment, hailed the upcoming clash between Ganguly's men in India and Pakistan's Waqar Younis squad.

The Indian media Thursday reported a rush to reach South Africa for Saturday's match by parliamentarians and businesspeople and executives.

Even the tie Wednesday with England managed to disrupt normal activities, although it took place after working hours in India.

Celebrations erupted in clubs and hotels in India and firecrackers in the national capital woke up people at the end of the game in Durban that finished at 2:00 am local time Thursday.

"Contacts which were being built up between the two civil societies through interactions must continue," he said.

Former Indian ambassador to Pakistan SK Singh, however, was dismissive of Saturday's clash.

"We have come to the conclusion that after the attack on parliament the least amount of contact with Pakistan would be the best indication of our attitude to the whole thing.

"This match is unavoidable because of the circumstances of the World Cup but I tell Pakistan 'please leave Kashmir out of it,'" the Indian diplomat said.

In Kashmir, which is uneasily divided between the hostile neighbours and claimed in its

entirety by both, matches between Pakistan and India are marked by bouts of shelling of each other's positions by the rival armies.

According to locals, if either side is unhappy about an umpiring decision, or a wicket falls, the shelling intensifies. Whenever side wins, they add, celebrates victory with a fresh barrage of shelling.

In Calcutta, where cricket fans usually become frenzied during India's matches, Wednesday's win against England restored the team to its former glory. Their humiliating early loss to Australia had blackened the team in the fans' eyes, with walls around the city being painted with scathing graffiti.

However, fans were Thursday seen painting over the graffiti and continuing celebrations which had begun during the night.

"The celebrations will continue until India's match against Pakistan," said Nandan Sen, a university graduate, painting his face with colours of Indian flag.

One cricket fan in New Delhi, quoted in the media Thursday, sums up, perhaps, the national mood going into Saturday's clash: "Losing a cricket match against Pakistan will be like losing a war, a complete loss of face."

Power theft rampant

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personal efforts by the organisations' leaders and further improvements would not be possible unless the government took some drastic measures.

"Reforms have been limited mainly to changing the names of the organisations and introducing some structural changes," comments a PDB official, "but the main problem area -- bill collection -- has remained unchanged."

To substantiate his arguments, he pointed out that different ministries and government organisations owe Tk 120 crore to PDB and this figure was gradually rising as the government has remained indifferent to the issue.

"When the government closed the Adamjee Jute Mills, it did not pay DESA the pending power bills exceeding Tk 100 crore," the source said.

"Most of the municipality authorities do not pay their dues," the PDB source said, "religious institutions also force us to give them free electricity. A number of

industries also do not pay regularly. Irrigation pump operators never pay running bills."

A DESA official pointed out, "most of the residents of government colonies do not pay for the electricity they are consuming."

In the past, DESA and PDB on several occasions urged the concerned ministers and secretaries to allow them to implement the drastic action plan against defaulters. "But we have always been discouraged," said a top PDB source.

Caught between politically patronised corrupt meter readers and officials and unscrupulous consumers, DESA never managed to earn more than its expenditure in its decade-old history.

Currently DESA purchases power worth Tk 140 crore to Tk 150 crore a month at a bulk rate of Tk 1.96 per unit of power from PDB. But after selling the same at an average rate of Tk 2.35 per unit, DESA manages to recover not more than Tk 140 crore to 150 crore. Again, DESA does not pay

more than Tk 100 crore a month to PDB as it uses the rest to pay its contractors and meet other costs. "As a result, DESA's outstanding bill with PDB is increasing by Tk 100 crore every two months," notes a PDB source. "Giving out DESA's zones to DESCO is not the solution here because DESCO is facing the same problem as DESA -- it cannot disconnect the lines of bill defaulters."

And the bill defaulters have the

blessings of an unscrupulous

section of meter readers, ledger

writers and officials -- who are

more powerful than the DESA or PDB management as they are

backed by the ruling party.

"In general, the reforms in the

power sector have never focussed

on the real issues -- because some

policy makers in all governments

have been historically benefited

by the corrupt axis. The reforms

were initiated not from the heart

of the policy makers -- but because

the donors had tagged these as

conditions with some large scale

loans," observed a PDB official.

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